

# Growing WILD

Utah's Project WILD Newsletter



Spring 1992



## *"The Fawn? She is the South Wind."*

In one of the old stories from the Seneca people, spring defeats winter. The young, strong spring brings sunshine. His warm breath brings plants, flowers and new grasses. The animals flock to meet him. His companion is the fawn. Fawn is the warm South Wind, blowing on the lodge of Old Man Winter. The walls of his lodge of ice and snow melt, and, where his cold "fire" burned, white flowers now bloom.

We know well how the seasons change here in Utah. We know that animals and plants adapt to these changes. Spring is the season when animals give birth to their young, and summer is when young animals prepare for their survival as adults. In the spring and summer in Utah, many people find young animals which appear to be abandoned by the adults. Sometimes the people who try to help these animals actually cause problems for them.

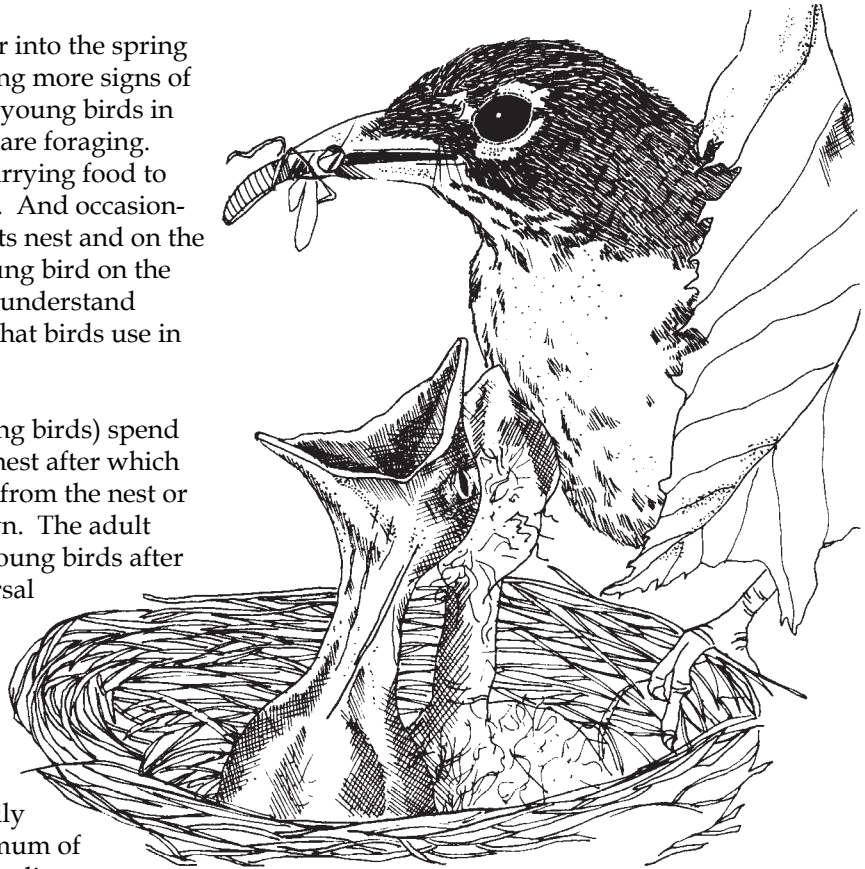
In this issue of *Growing WILD*, we have taken a closer look at these young animals. On pages 2-3, we have information about what to do when you find baby birds or young fawns. You can help Utah's wildlife at this critical time of year by teaching your students what they should (and shouldn't) do when they find these young animals. We also have a new video available which focuses on the "play" of young animals and how it prepares them for survival. In addition, we have a new "Discover Utah Wildlife" poster, summer classes, activities and resources to share.

*As we end one WILD season and get ready to begin another, we thank all of you for your important contributions to environmental education in Utah!*

## *Young Birds Survive Best in Natural Environments*

As the sun crawls higher into the spring sky, we will be seeing and hearing more signs of young birds. Often we hear the young birds in their nests while the adult birds are foraging. Sometimes we see adult birds carrying food to the nests and feeding the young. And occasionally we see a young bird out of its nest and on the ground. When we do find a young bird on the ground, it is important for us to understand some of the adaptive strategies that birds use in raising their young.

Most passerines (perching birds) spend only six to fourteen days in the nest after which adult birds will push the young from the nest or the young will leave on their own. The adult birds will continue to feed the young birds after they leave the nests. This dispersal strategy increases the survival rate of the young because adult birds moving to and from the nesting area attract the attention of predators. If all the young birds were still together in the nest, a predator could easily kill an entire brood with a minimum of effort. Since the young birds are dispersed, it is much more likely that some young will survive predation and live to reproduce.



When you come across a young bird on the ground, it is highly likely that the bird is safe and under the care of an adult bird. You should resist the temptation to remove the bird from the wild. Leave the bird where you find it and immediately leave the area. If a child brings a bird to you and it is well-feathered, ask the child to return the bird to the area where it was found. Handle the bird as little as possible because human contact will stress the bird. If a bird is not feathered, try to return the bird to its nest. Don't injure yourself or the other young birds in the nest during the process. Contrary to popular belief, the adult bird will not reject the young bird after it has been handled by humans. Birds have a very poorly developed sense of smell. If a young unfeathered bird is found that cannot be returned to the nest, contact your regional Division of Wildlife Resources office. It is important for you to know that the survival rate of young unfeathered birds is very low.

### *Announcing the Newest Member of the Utah WILD Team!*

Bob Ellis was recently hired as Assistant Coordinator for Utah's Project WILD program. Most recently from Austin, Texas, Bob brings a rich and varied background as an environmental educator to our program. In addition to several years as a classroom teacher, Bob has also worked with natural history field study programs in the Virgin Islands and with National Wildlife Federation's "Teen Adventures" program. We are thrilled to have Bob on the WILD team -- Welcome to Utah, Bob!

## *Fawns Are Left Hiding While Adults Forage*

The behavior and reproductive strategies of wild animals are adaptations to the pressures of the natural world. These behaviors and strategies have been selected over the course of countless generations. When we are lucky enough to get a glimpse of a fawn snuggled down in the grass, we want to be sure that our actions do not harm these wild animals.

Among the many animal behaviors and strategies are two that we should remember when we come across young mammals in the wild.

1. Many adult mammals, such as mule deer, rely on hiding their young while foraging. Fawns have almost no scent and, when left alone, instinctively lie motionless. When you come across a fawn in the wild, do not attempt to capture it. Leave the area immediately. It is highly probable that the adult deer is watching and is waiting for you to leave so it can feed its young.
2. It is often the case that over half of the wild animals will die before they are one year old. If all the young wild animals did survive, there would be far too many animals for the land to support; however, those animals best able to survive are the animals that are naturally selected. Don't become an unnatural factor that limits the reproductive success of wild animals.

**If you do come across a dead adult animal whose young is still alive, you should contact your regional Division of Wildlife Resources office. Do not attempt to capture the young animal, and be sure to give clear directions to Division personnel as to its location. As with bird rehabilitation, it is important to remember that deer rehabilitation is not very successful. Over half the wildlife young that are placed in rehabilitation die.**

Thank you for sharing this information with your students!



### *Adaptive Strategies of Play*

Watch the young of wild predators and grazers at play in two separate presentations on this 46 minute video-tape, "Catch Me If You Can." Amazing footage captures both the spirit of wild animals at play and some of the possible adaptive strategies of play. The video can be checked out through the Project WILD Office in Salt Lake City (801-538-4719).



Feather by Shane Hamblin,  
Project WILD teacher, Roosevelt

### New "Discover Utah Wildlife" Poster Features Burrowing Owl

At first glance, you might say that the eyes are its dominant feature. Then you might notice its sparsely feathered knock-kneed legs. Or you might just glance at the overall photo, captivated by this small owl which can be seen perched on the ground in Utah!

Ideal for classroom and educational use, this poster is available at no charge. Please pick one up at any Wildlife Resources office or contact the Project WILD Office at 538-4719 or 538-4720, and we'll mail one out to you.

## Status of Burrowing Owls in Utah Currently Being Studied

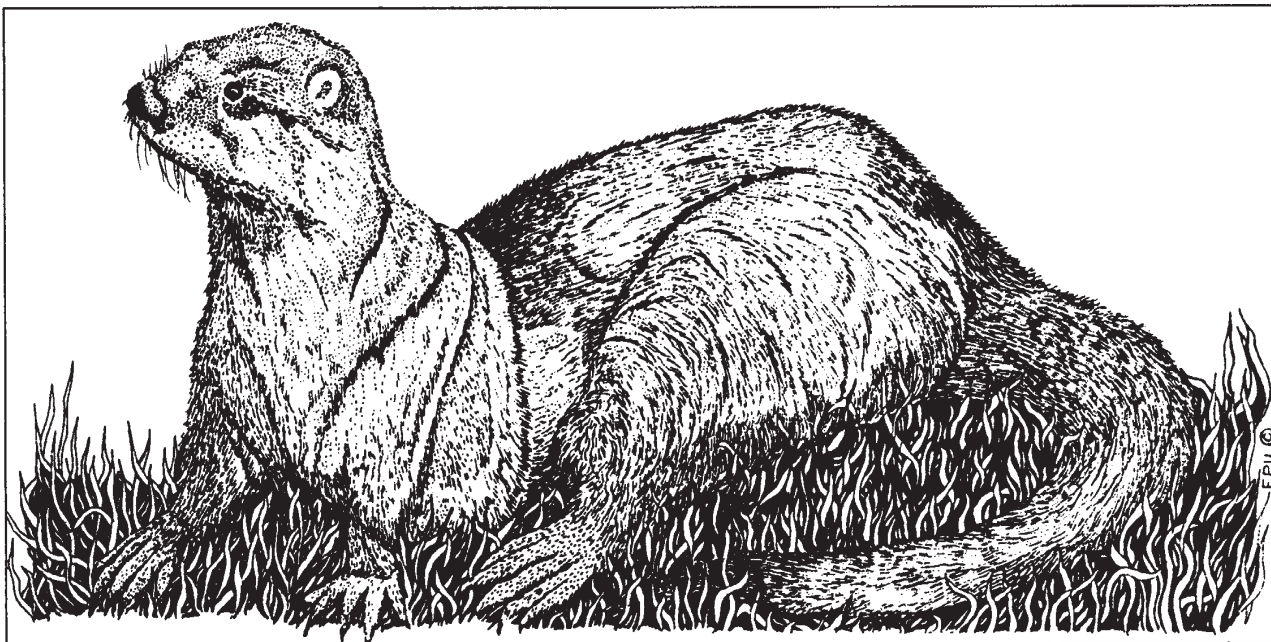
*Historically, burrowing owls have been common residents around Utah towns, farms and roads. Today, biologists are concerned about the burrowing owl's current status throughout the state. This concern may lead to their classification as a "sensitive" species on our state's list of "species of special concern."*

The burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) is the only small owl that habitually perches on the ground. It is 9-11 inches long with a relatively wide wingspan (22"-24"). Its round head has no ear tufts, and it has a short tail. Burrowing owls often are seen bobbing and bowing from their perch, and they even occasionally flip themselves in the air.

In mid-April, burrowing owls migrate back into Utah to nest. Courtship behavior may be observed near their burrows and consists of the owls rubbing their bills and heads together as well as communicating to one another in soft tones. A nest is constructed in a ground hole, such as in an abandoned prairie dog, badger or marmot burrow. The owls lay 5-9 white eggs, and both parents incubate the eggs for about 21 days. Both parents bring food to the burrow, and the young emerge from the burrow in early June. They remain near the burrow and escape underground when threatened. By mid-July, they are fully fledged and fly short distances. Diet is mainly insects and small mammals. Because of this, burrowing owls are usually most active in the daytime or at dawn and dusk. They also prey on reptiles, amphibians and birds, and they frequently hover when hunting. Burrowing owls leave Utah in November, migrating to southern climates.

This year, the burrowing owl will receive some extra attention from the students at Rowland Hall-St. Marks School in Salt Lake City. Interested in adopting a special species and its habitat in Utah, these students decided to contribute monies collected from their recycling efforts to the Division of Wildlife Resources program which focuses on protecting burrowing owl populations. Therese Smith-Berry and Theresa Cryns, coordinators for the Adopt-A-Species Program at Rowland Hall, have worked with Frank Howe, Avian Program Coordinator at the Division, to establish this on-going project. For more information about Rowland Hall's program, contact Therese Smith-Berry, 801-355-7485.





## Wanted!

- What:** River Otters (*Lutra canadensis*)
- Where:** Green River through Desolation Canyon and at Mineral Bottom
- When:** Late summer and fall of 1992 and 1993
- Why:** To restore historically native species to Utah wildlife habitats
- How:** Through contributions of any amount to be used for transplanting river otters  
(Cost for transplanting one river otter from Alaska to Utah is \$350.)

In the past few years, Project WILD teachers and students have offered strong support to Utah's Adopt-An-Otter Program. School projects which combined learning about river otters with creative fund raising ideas have contributed \$7500 to the river otter project. This funding enabled the purchase of twenty-one river otters for re-introduction into Utah's rivers, and the program has involved hundreds of Utah students. Up to this time, over 50 river otters have been introduced into the Green River below Flaming Gorge, and they have successfully adapted to their new environment. In fact, this re-introduction program is the first which has documented successful reproduction for females during the spring following their fall transplant. **In order to expand this successful program, biologists with the Division of Wildlife Resources are again asking for help from Project WILD teachers and students.**

If you're interested in arranging for your class to adopt a river otter for the Green River, please return this form to Brent Stettler, Information and Education Manager, Division of Wildlife Resources, 455 West Railroad Avenue, Price, UT 84501 or call him at 435- 636-0266 for more information.

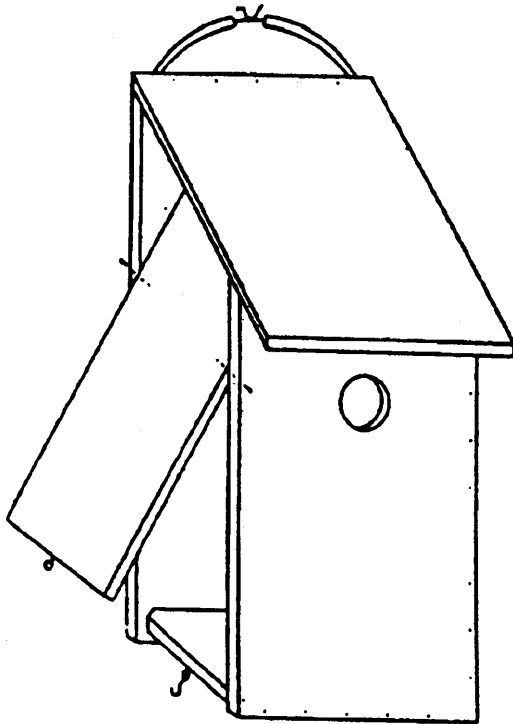
Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

*Each class will receive a certificate of adoption, the Wildlife Notebook Series and Discover Utah Wildlife posters.*

# Bluebird Nesting Box Plans

During the past few months we have received several inquiries about bluebird boxes. In addition to the nesting box plans, we are including information that is specific to bluebird nesting in Utah.



The dimensions included above apply to 3/4" thick lumber.

Use 1/2" - 3/4" thick lumber; avoid plywood and preserve internal dimensions.

Use 1 1/4" - 1 3/4" long galvanized box nails.

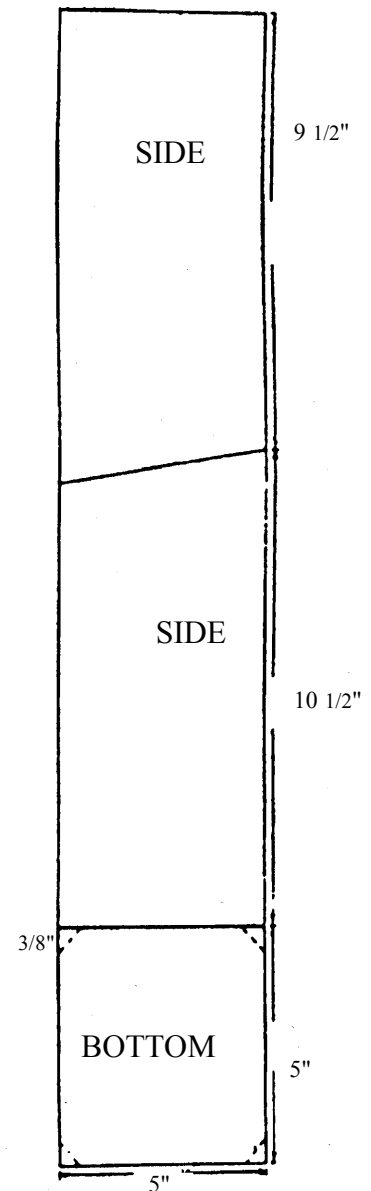
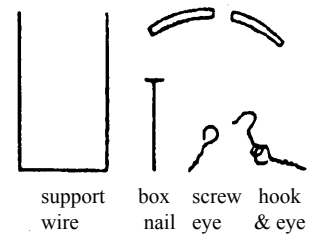
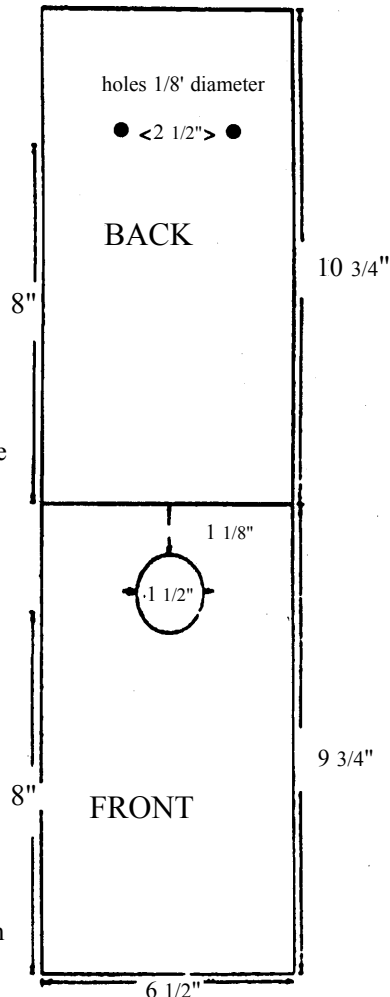
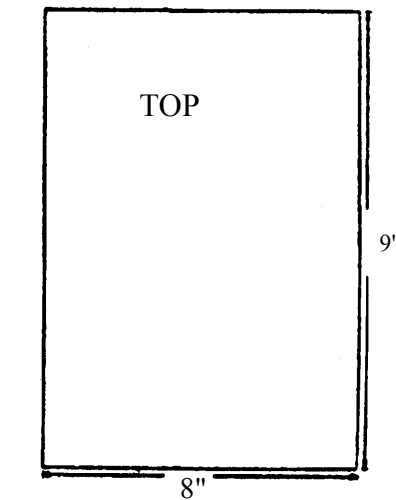
Recess the bottom piece 1/4" to prevent rot due to water seepage.

Allow a 1/4" vent space above the two side pieces.

The top edge of the front and back pieces may be cut or sanded at an angle to better accommodate the top piece.

Use a screw eye and a hook-and-eye combination to secure the side door suspended from the pivot nails.

The pivot nails should be driven into the front and back pieces exactly the same distance from the bottom of the box.



## Natural History

There are two species of bluebirds that nest in Utah. The Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) is found statewide at elevations between 5000 feet and 12,000 feet. The birds prefer open woodlands, meadows and clearings of aspen, cottonwood or coniferous forests. The Mountain Bluebird will come down into the valleys during winter.

The Western Bluebird (*Sialia Mexicana*) is found in the central and southern portions of the state. These birds prefer open woodlands and pasturelands where old trees provide nesting sites. The Western Bluebird may soon appear on Utah's list of "species of special concern."

Bluebirds are insectivorous. Ninety percent of their diet consists of insects while the remaining ten percent of their diet is berries. The birds may often be seen perched on top of a tree or bush scanning the air for insects which are caught in mid-flight.

Both species are cavity nesting birds. They rely on woodpeckers or other birds to create cavities in trees which the bluebirds use. The clearing of land for firewood and for agriculture has decreased the number of nesting trees. The birds also face increased competition for available nesting sites by other birds. There is also some concern about pesticide applications affecting bluebird populations.

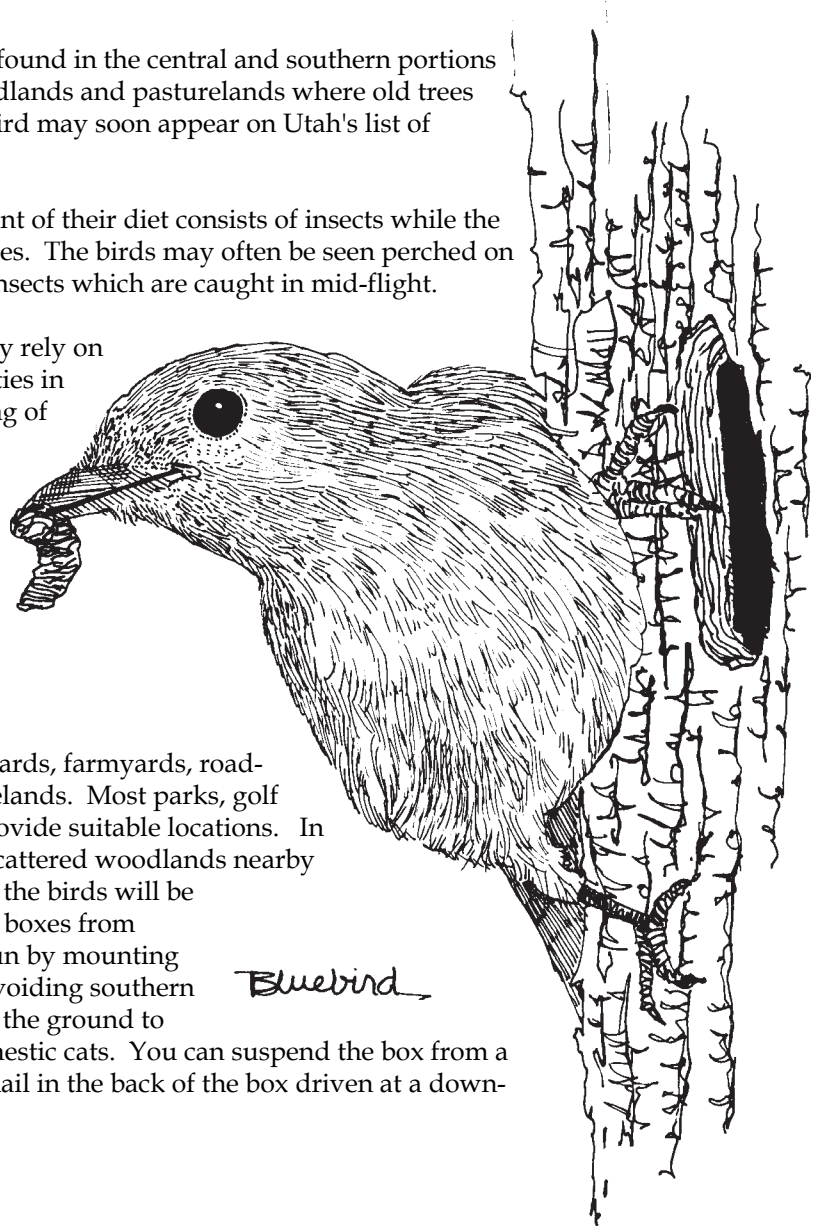
## Box Locations

Boxes should be placed in areas near orchards, farmyards, roadsides, open woodlands, fields and pasturelands. Most parks, golf courses, and vacant lots in urban areas provide suitable locations. In rural areas, fence lines along fields with scattered woodlands nearby provide good sites. If the site is too open, the birds will be vulnerable to predation and heat. Protect boxes from prevailing winds and the hot afternoon sun by mounting them on the lee side of mounting posts, avoiding southern exposure. Attach the box 5-10 feet above the ground to discourage vandalism and attacks by domestic cats. You can suspend the box from a pole or fence post or nail it with a single nail in the back of the box driven at a downward angle. Do not nail it to a live tree.

## Monitoring and Maintenance

Bluebirds often nest twice a year, once in April and then again later in the spring or summer. You should watch the box with binoculars to see if bluebirds are using the box. If possible, record sightings of birds utilizing the nest box. You may clean the box in the fall and examine the nest at that time. Remove all debris and scrape the interior walls with a putty knife. We would be interested in receiving information from you about where you placed your bluebird nesting box and about the birds you observed using it. Remember that it's possible for birds other than bluebirds to nest in the box.

**This is an excellent action project for students at all grade levels. Thanks for your interest!**



# Summer Learning Opportunities For WILD Teachers

## International Rainforest Workshop

Travel to a Costa Rican or Amazonian Rainforest with other educators in a "hands-on" workshop to learn about rainforest ecology. International Expeditions will offer International Rainforest Workshops in Costa Rica, June 20-27, and one in the Amazon, July 11-18. For more information, call International Expeditions at 800-633-4734.

## Teton Science School

The Teton Science School offers a wide variety of wildlife seminars for adults. Learn how to share nature with children or about wolf recovery in Yellowstone. For more information about the classes listed, call 307-733-4765 and ask about the Adult Seminars.

### June

The Grizzly Bears. Dr. Charles Jonkel. June 5-7. \$125  
Birds of Jackson Hole. Bert Raynes. June 12-14. \$125  
Eagles and Hawks of the Yellowstone Area. June 15-19. \$205  
Amphibians and Reptiles of the Yellowstone Area. June 20-21. \$85  
Interpreting Tracks and Sign. Bruce Thompson. June 27-29. \$125

### July

Wildlife Canoe Trip. July 6. \$45  
Wetlands Identification, Ecology, and Regulation. July 8-10. \$125  
Birding with Bert Raynes. July 12. \$45  
Wildlife Conservation Techniques. David Moody. July 16. \$45  
Sharing the Sense of Wonder with Children. July 24-25. \$85  
Animal Behavior. Dr. Allen Stokes. July 27-31. \$205

### August

Alpine Butterflies. Larry Livingood. August 1. \$45  
Bringing Back Wyoming's Endangered Species. August 4. \$45  
Birding with Bert Raynes. August 9. \$45  
Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goats. August 14-20. \$285  
Wolf Recovery in Yellowstone. Norm Bishop. August 19. \$45

## National Audubon Society

Visit and investigate ecosystems throughout the world with Ecology Camps and Workshops. Listed below are some of the summer offerings. Contact National Audubon Society at 203-869-2017 for more information.

Audubon Camp in the West. Field Ecology in Wind River Mountains, WY. \$650  
Scholarships available through local Audubon chapters.

June 27-July 3  
July 4-10  
July 11-17  
July 18-24  
July 25-31  
August 1-7

Endangered Species and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. In-depth field-oriented workshop develops understanding of conservation challenge. June 13-20. \$995





## *More Summer Learning Opportunities*

### **The Yellowstone Institute**

Track mammals, study bears, go on a llama trek, or investigate predator-prey relationships at The Yellowstone Institute. For a catalog or more information, contact The Yellowstone Institute, P.O. Box 117, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190, 307-344-7381 ext. 2384.

### **The Utah Museum of Natural History**

Once again, UMNH is offering a full calendar of summer events for teachers. If you are interested in a more complete listing or attending any of the following listings, contact Dee Dee O'Brien at 801-581-6928.

Wildflowers of the Wasatch Foothills. May 29-30. \$27.50

Insect Safari. June 10 or July 11. \$30

Naturalist Weekend at Snowbird. August 1-2 or 15-16. \$55

### **Alpine Conference**

Explore a wide variety of methods used in teaching about the environment at the Alpine Conference. This is a great opportunity to learn how to integrate environmental education into all subject areas. The conference is held in Alpine, WY, June 14-19. Contact Dr. Shirley Wright, 2278 Diane, Pocatello, ID 83201, 208-237-5401.

### **Fish and Wildlife Ecology Workshop**

Increase your knowledge of bird and fish identification through experience at the Fish and Wildlife Ecology Workshop in McCall, ID, July 7-13. For more information, contact Dr. Lewis Nelson, Jr., Department of Fish and Wildlife, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83843, 208-885-7323.

### **Heartland Peaks Outdoor Education Workshop**

Mainstream students through environmental education. Training in "Comets" and Keepers of the Earth. Contact Dick McCloskey, 326 Sandra Street, Eagle, ID 83616, 208-385-3262.

### **Canyonlands Field Institute**

Earn graduate credit at the Eighth Annual Colorado Plateau Teachers Workshop. A week-long field study course designed to immerse teachers in the natural history of the Colorado Plateau. Scholarships are available. For more information about this course or one of the many others offered, call 435-259-7750 or write CFI, 1320 S. Hwy 191, P.O. Box 68, Moab, UT 84532.

### **National Wildlife Federation - NatureQuest**

Now teachers have an opportunity to receive three days of training in a variety of conservation education programs including Project Learning Tree and NatureScope. NatureQuest workshops are offered in many locations across the country. Call 800-245-5484 for more information.

### **Central Utah Outdoor Education Workshop (Gooseberry Guard Station)**

Immerse yourself in environmental and outdoor education in a beautiful setting. This 40-hour workshop is a past favorite of many WILD teachers. For more information, contact Vern Fridley at Utah Society for Environmental Education, 230 South 500 East, Suite 280, Salt Lake City, UT 84102, 801-328-1549.

# Curriculum Resources

## Raptors

The Colorado Division of Wildlife is offering, free of charge, the **"Operation Osprey Teacher Activity Guide."** Activities are designed for grades K-12, and the guide is packed with information and resources. For your free copy, contact Lisa Evans at Division of Wildlife, Northeast Regional Office, 317 Prospect, Fort Collins, CO 80526, 303-484-2836.

If you need a detailed guide to the natural history of raptors of the Great Basin, you will be interested in the Nevada Department of Wildlife's **Raptors of Nevada**. The guide has wonderful photos and is well-written. Contact Gary Herron at the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Box 10678, Reno, NV 89520-0022. Cost of the guide is \$10.

## Wetlands

In response to the ever increasing encroachment on wetlands, many agencies and organizations are producing educational materials promoting wetland conservation. Since there are many WILD teachers in Utah requesting additional wetland information, we have researched the following resources:

**WOW! The Wonder of Wetlands** is an educator's guide containing more than 40 classroom and outdoor lessons. The guide includes a restoration and action section that offers a wide variety of conservation projects. The guide is free, but there is a shipping and handling charge of \$3.50 for 1-2 copies. Contact Britt Slattery, Environmental Concern Education Department, P.O. Box P, St. Michaels, MD 21663, 301-745-9620.

**Wetlands Hotline 1-800-832-7828.** May is American Wetlands Month. Find out the current status of wetland legislation or request an information packet that includes a calendar that is loaded with action tips, conference information and additional resource agencies.

## Project Learning Tree

Joan Dolph, previously the Teacher/Naturalist at the Ogden Nature Center, is the new Coordinator for Project Learning Tree in Utah. She offers teachers a busy slate of workshop opportunities in the upcoming months. Call Joan at 801-538-5505 for more information or to register for a workshop.

May 22-23	Morgan School District
June 22-23	University of Utah
September 25-26	Weber County School District
October 2-3	Sevier School District
October 23-24	Alpine School District

**The Ogden Nature Center** has announced a new nine month, part-time Teacher/Naturalist position starting September 1992. Applicants must have two years of experience working with children as a teacher, camp counselor or in a related capacity. Broad knowledge of natural science is beneficial (\$7.00 per hour/3 hours daily). Applicants should send resumes to Ogden Nature Center, 966 West 12th Street, Ogden, UT 84404, 801-621-7595.

## For Hands-On Science

Beginning fall 1992, the Ogden Nature Center will expand their nature education programs to offer more opportunities to districts throughout Utah. Interested teachers are invited to call Mary Cox, Director, at 621-7595 about scheduling field sessions with their Teacher/Naturalist.

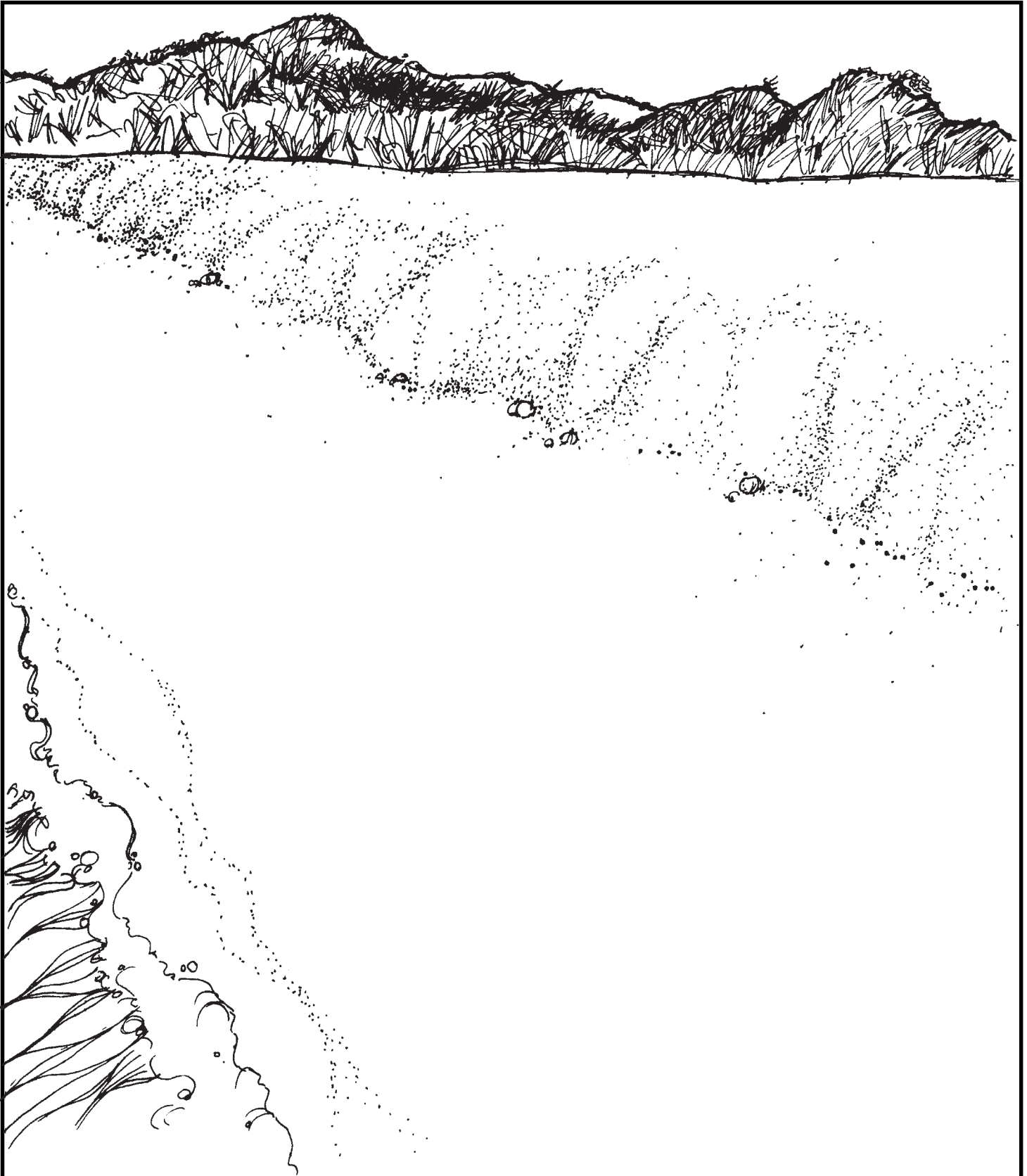
## Consumer Choices Count

If you are having difficulty finding environmentally "friendly" products in your community, try the following companies:

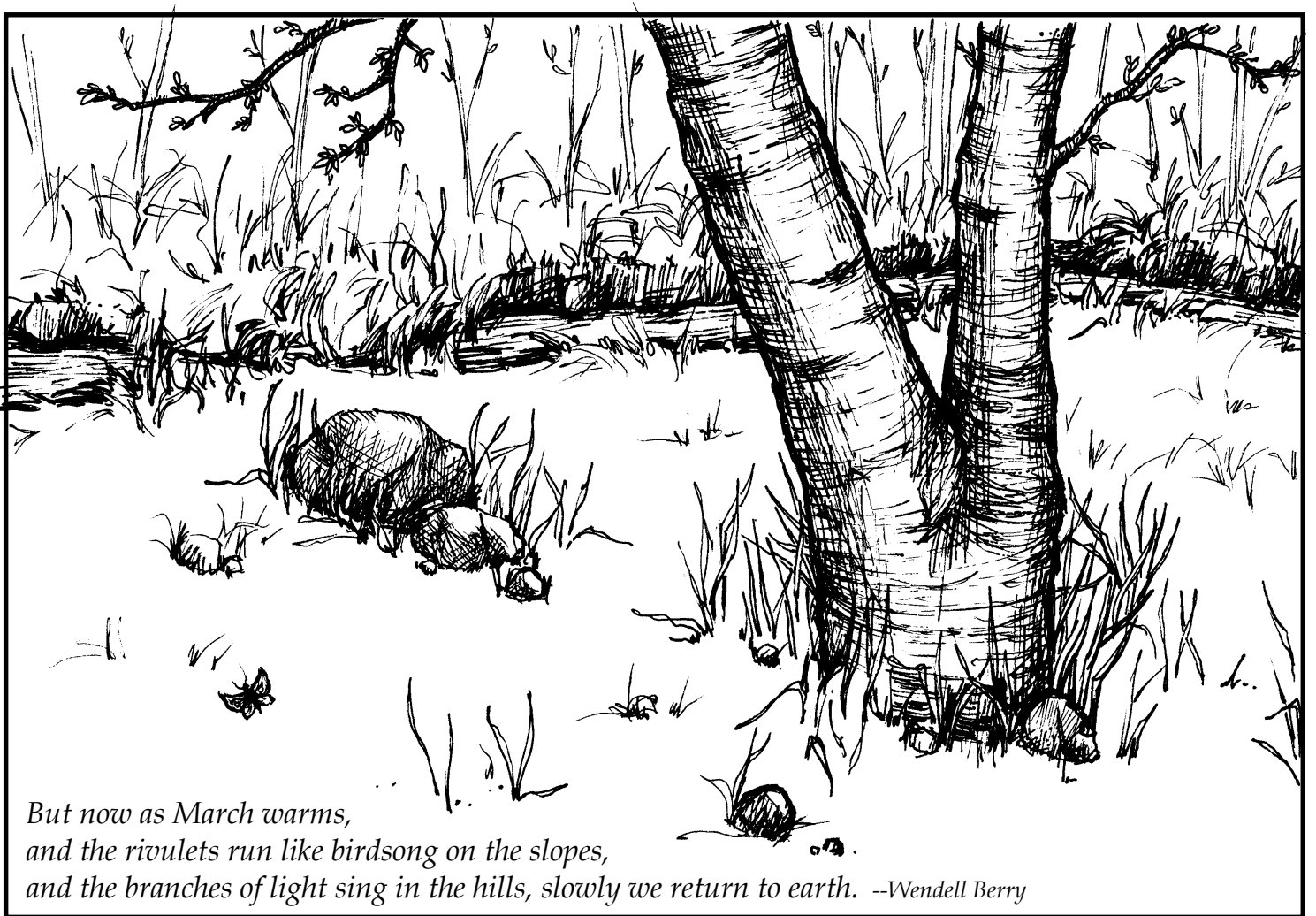
Earth Care Paper, Inc., Recycled Paper Catalog, P.O. Box 3335, Madison, WI 54704, 608-256-5522.

Seventh Generation, Products for a Healthy Planet, Colchester, VT 05446-1672, 800-456-1177.

*Growing WILD, Utah's Project WILD Newsletter, is written and edited by Bob Ellis, Brenda Schussman and Daphne Sewing, Coordinators, Project WILD; Imagination Page, front and back page illustrations are by Jill Rensel.*



Predators often prey on young animals. When turtle hatchlings emerge from their nests at night, they race to the sea across the beach. Sometimes crabs, coyotes and birds try to catch and eat the hatchlings. Show the hatchlings racing from their nest to the sea.



*But now as March warms,  
and the rivulets run like birdsong on the slopes,  
and the branches of light sing in the hills, slowly we return to earth. --Wendell Berry*